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(54) **HARDWOOD TEXTURING APPARATUS AND METHODS FOR USING SAME**

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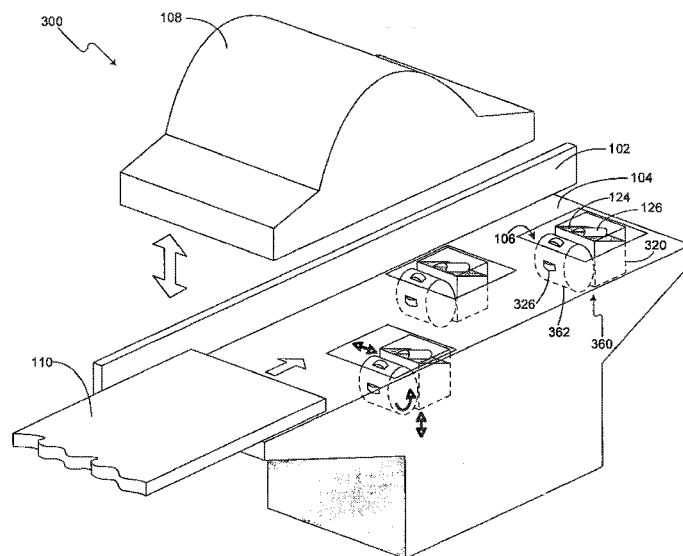
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Texturing apparatuses and methods are provided for forming a textured surface on a panel. An exemplary texturing apparatus has a bed and a mount having at least one cutting blade that can be configured to impart a cut to a top structural surface of the panel as the panel is moved along the bed. The bed is configured to receive the panel and can define one or more openings. The mount is operably positioned in the opening and can be articulated in one or more directions with respect to the plane of the bed.

23 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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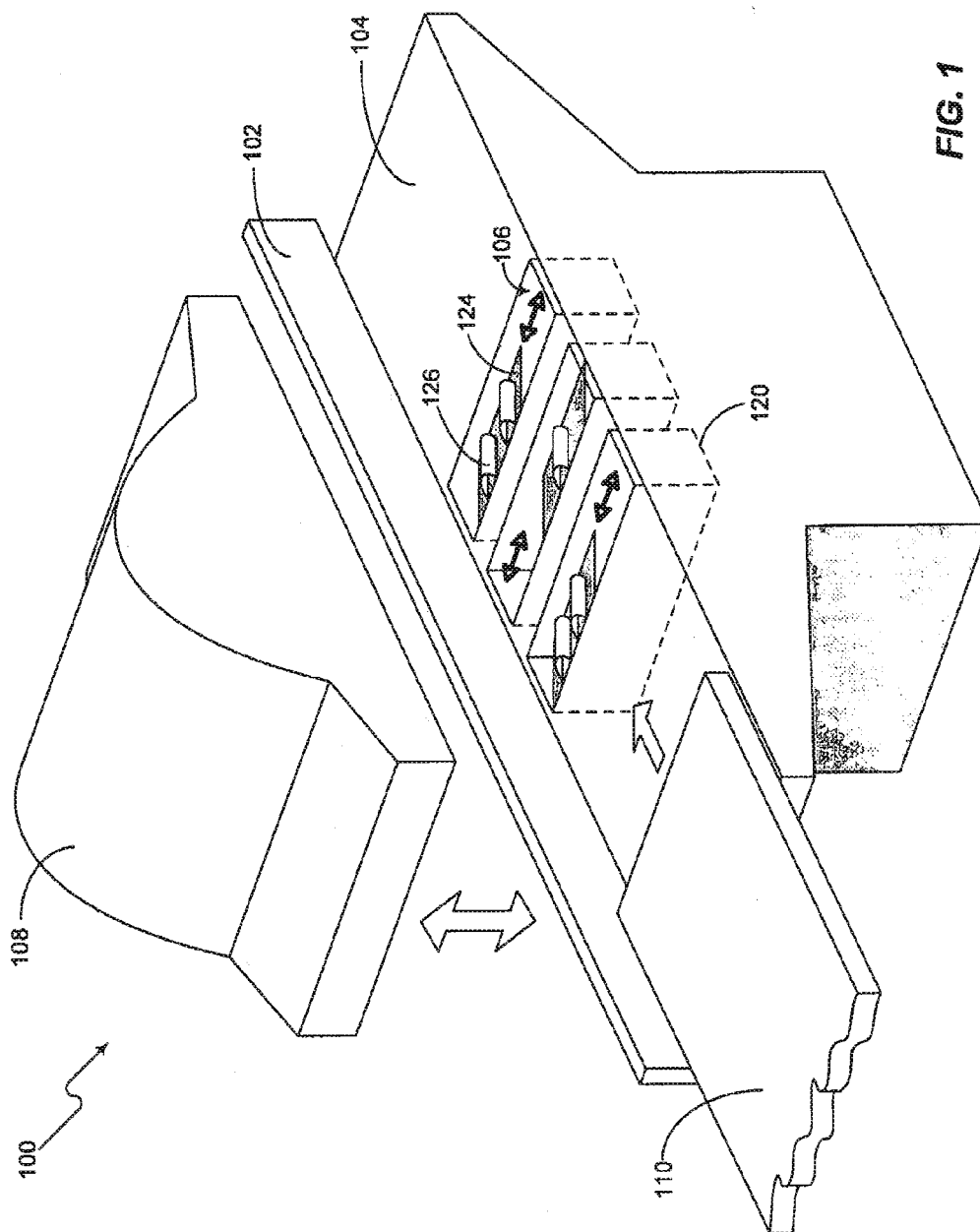
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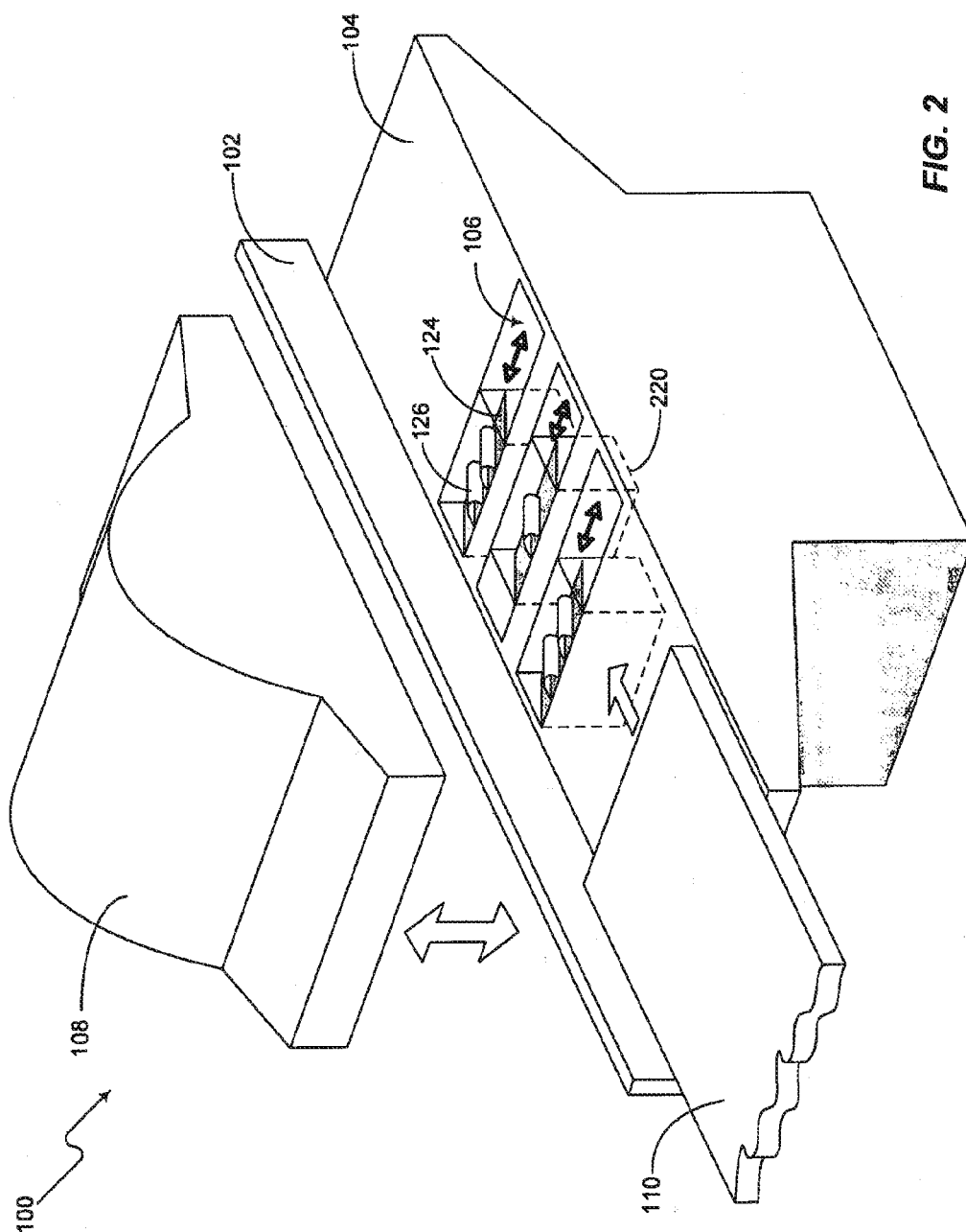
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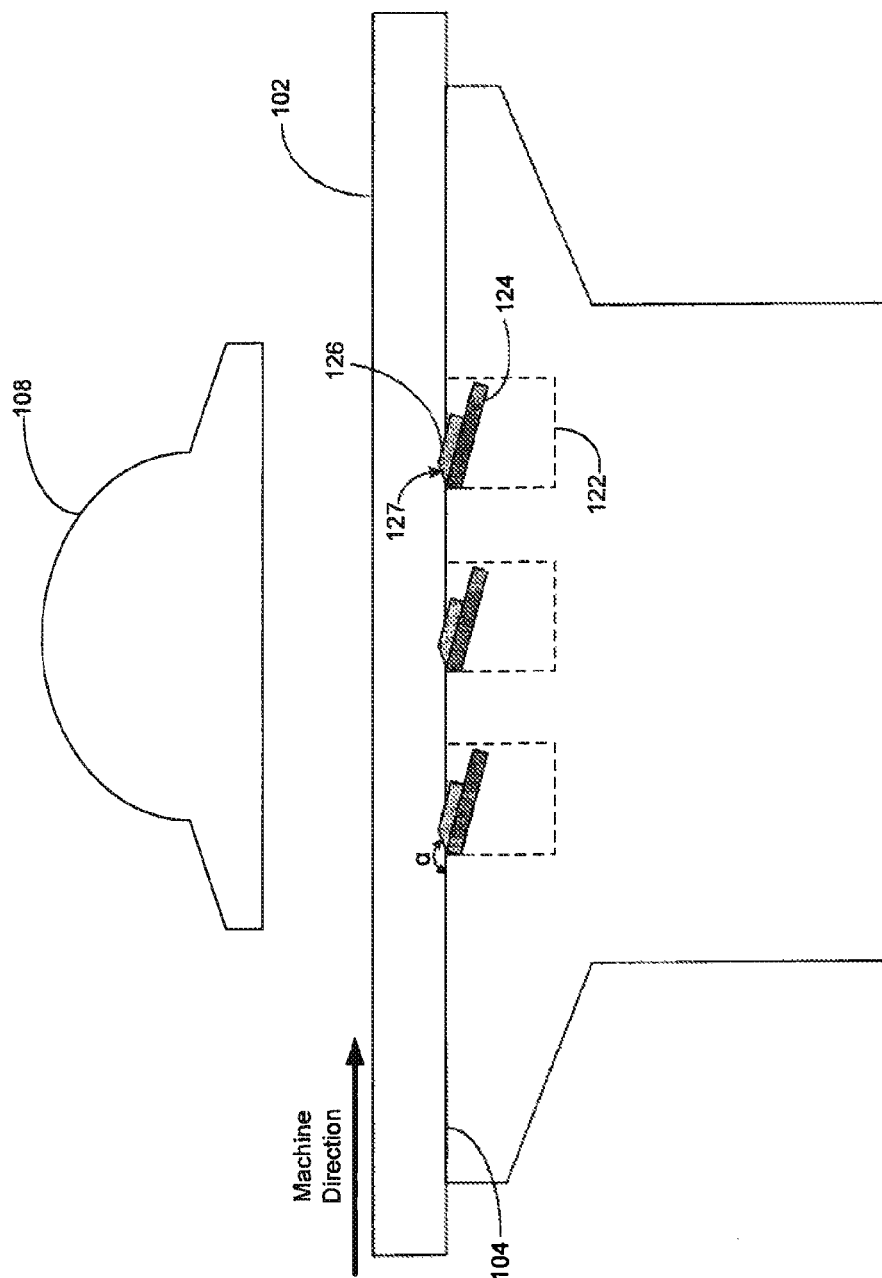
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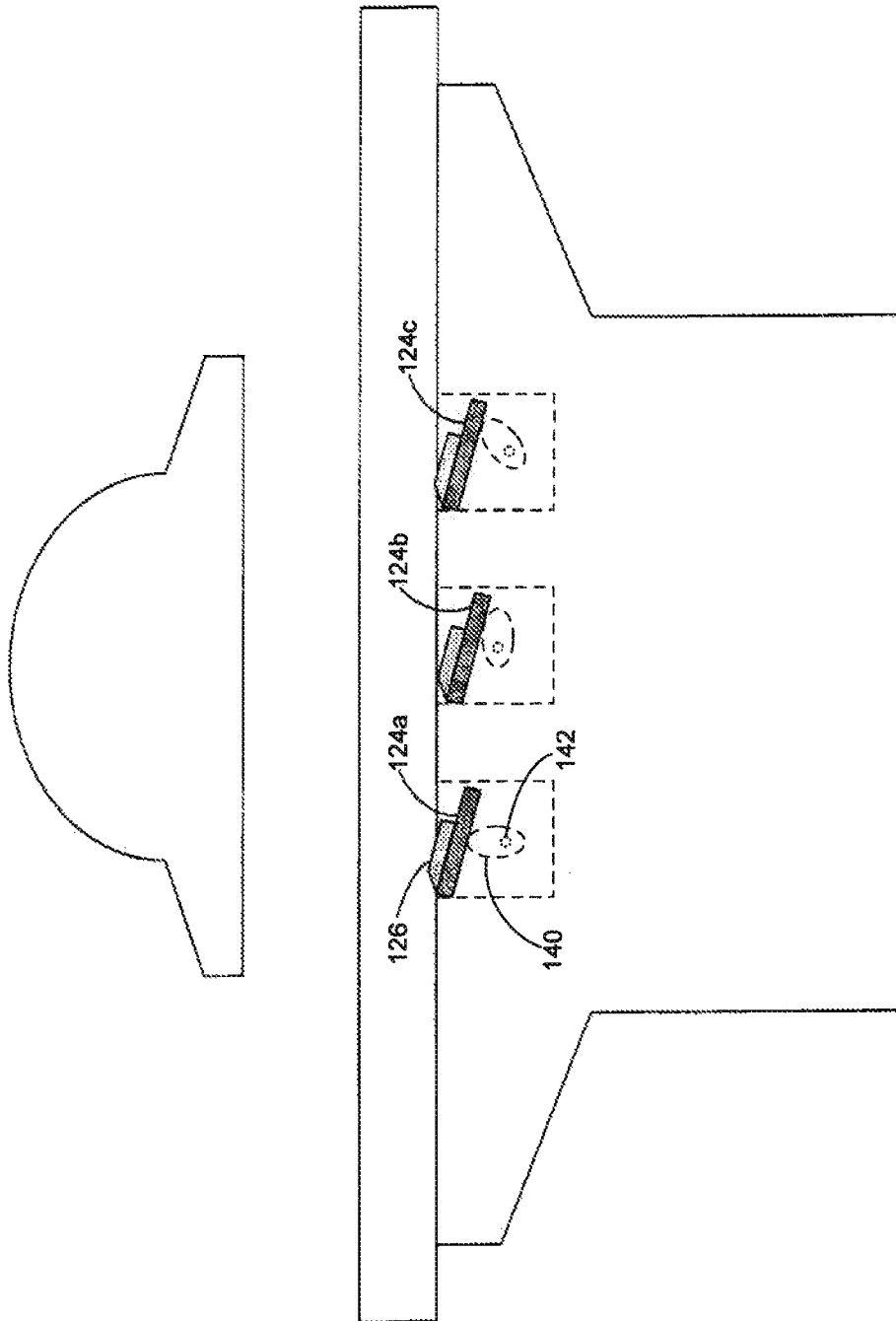
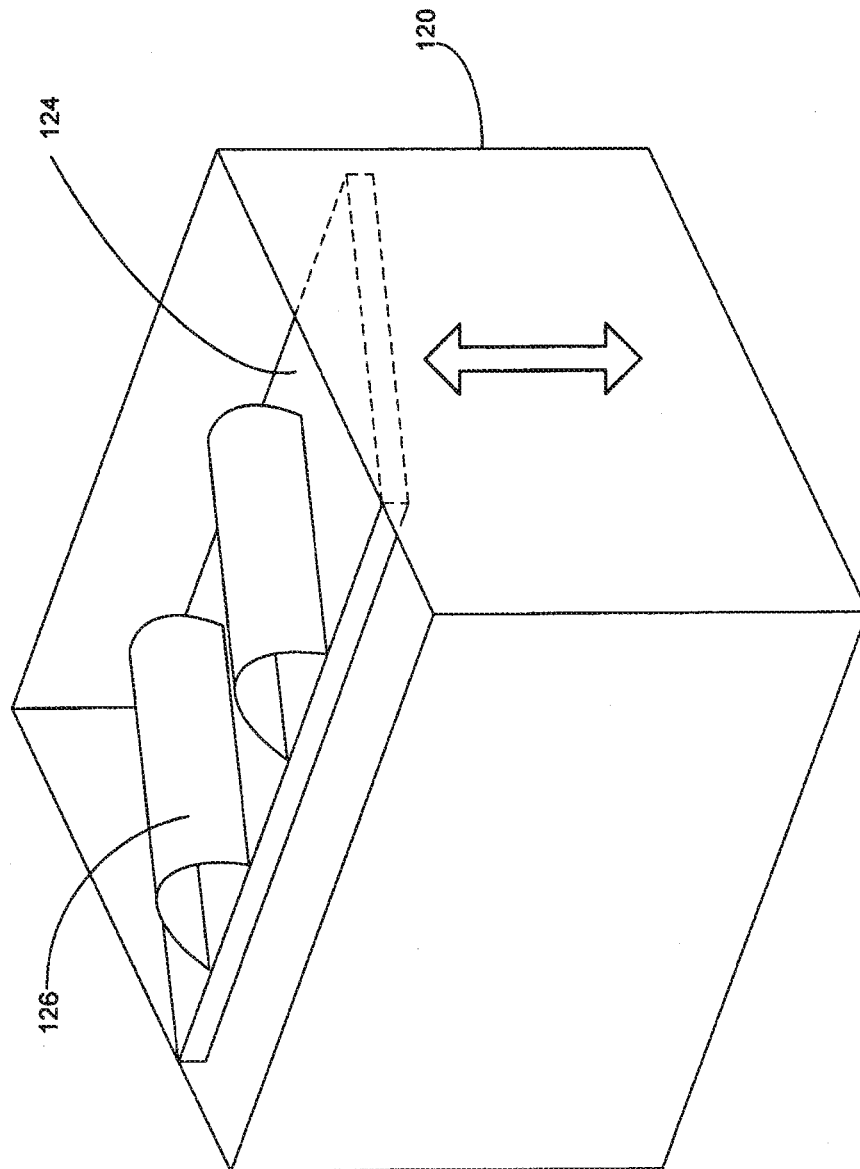


FIG. 4



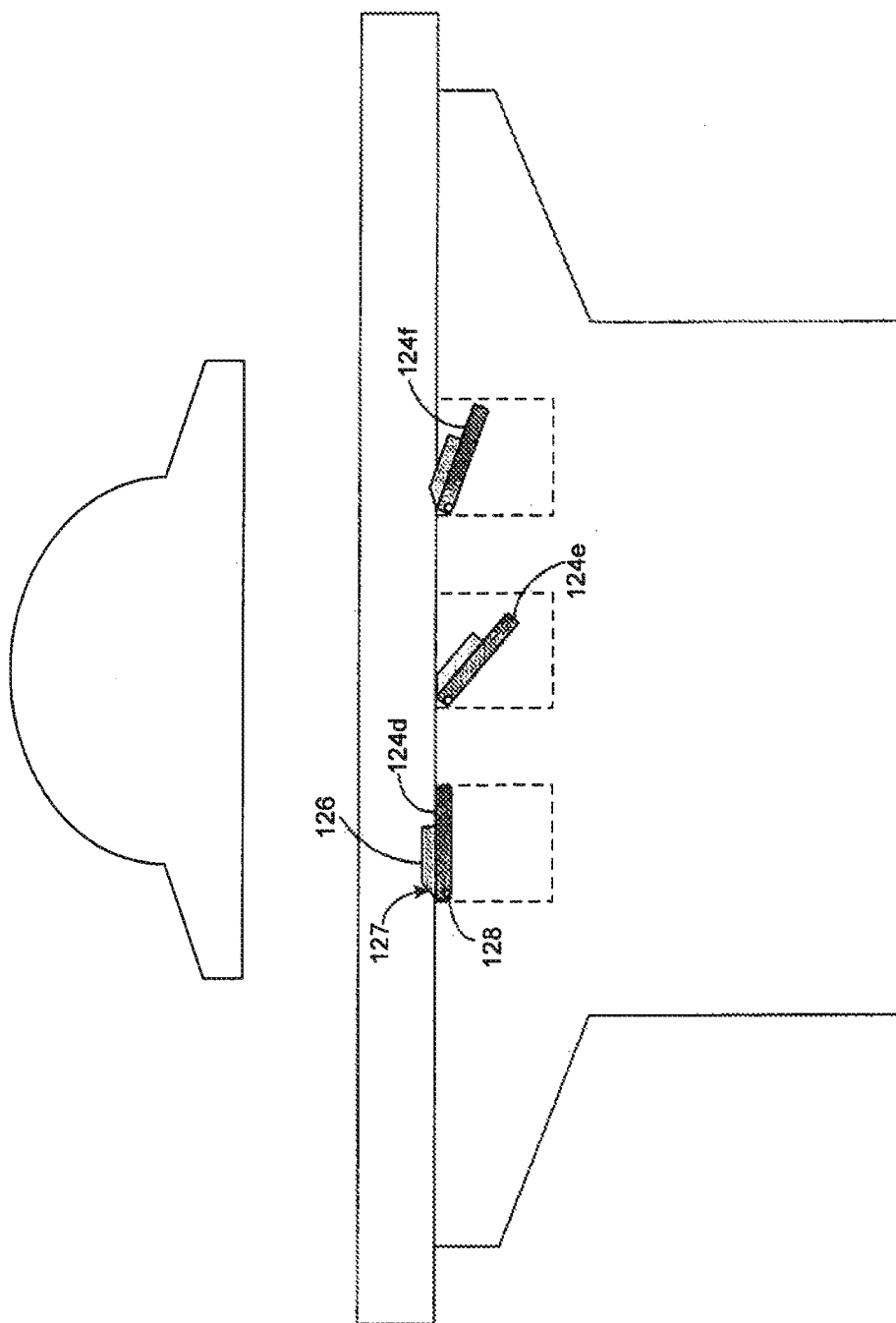


FIG. 6

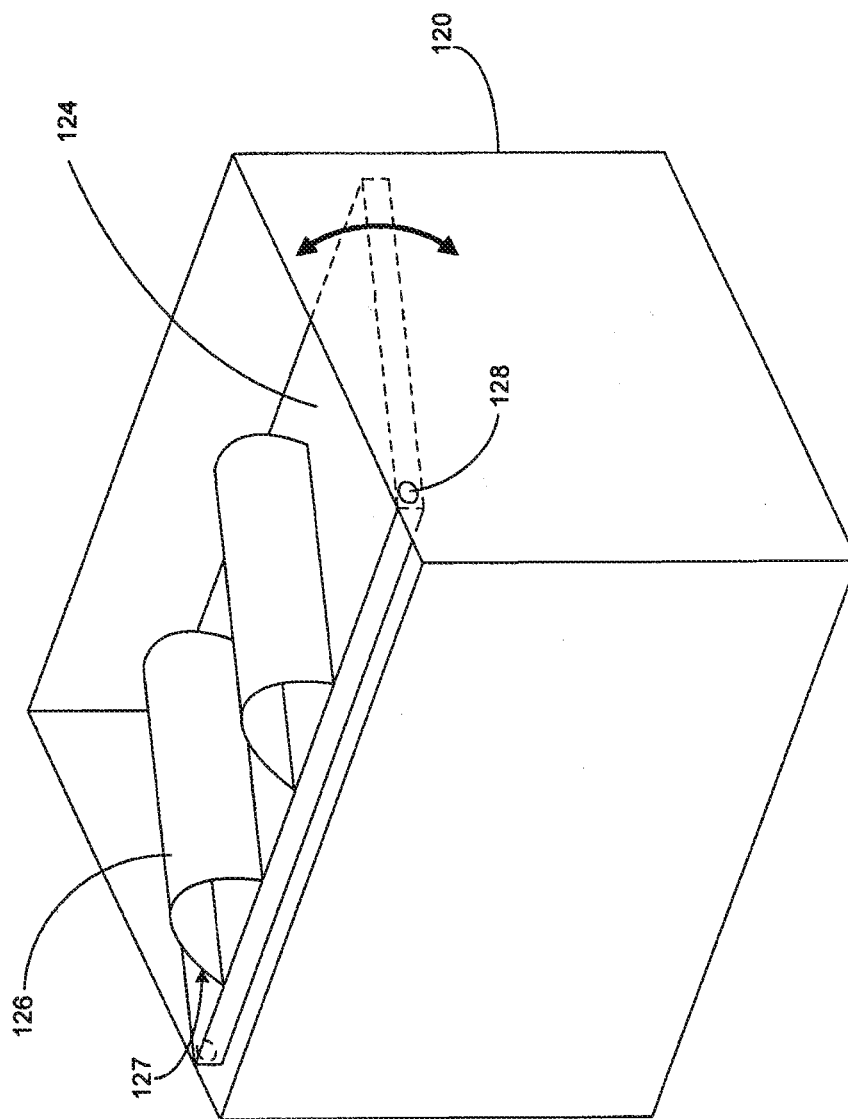
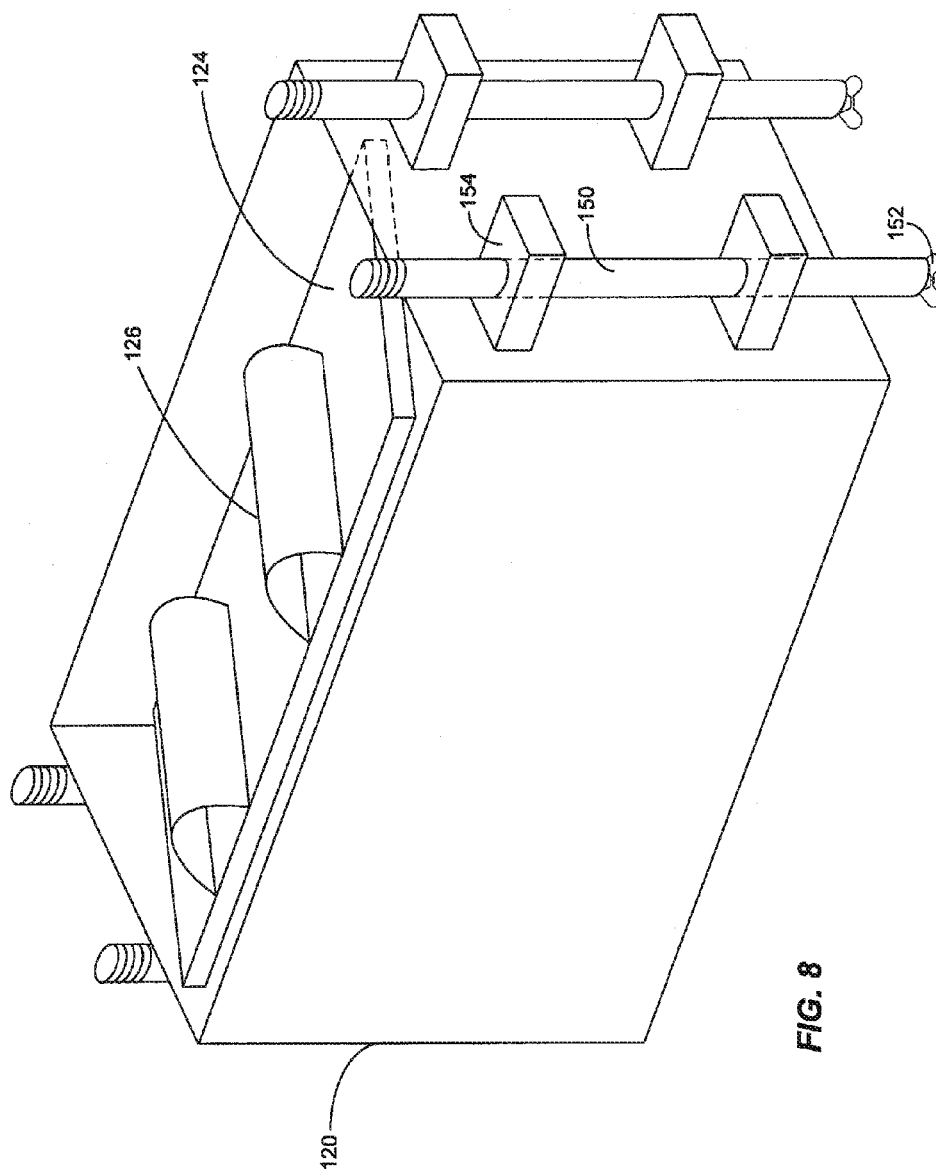
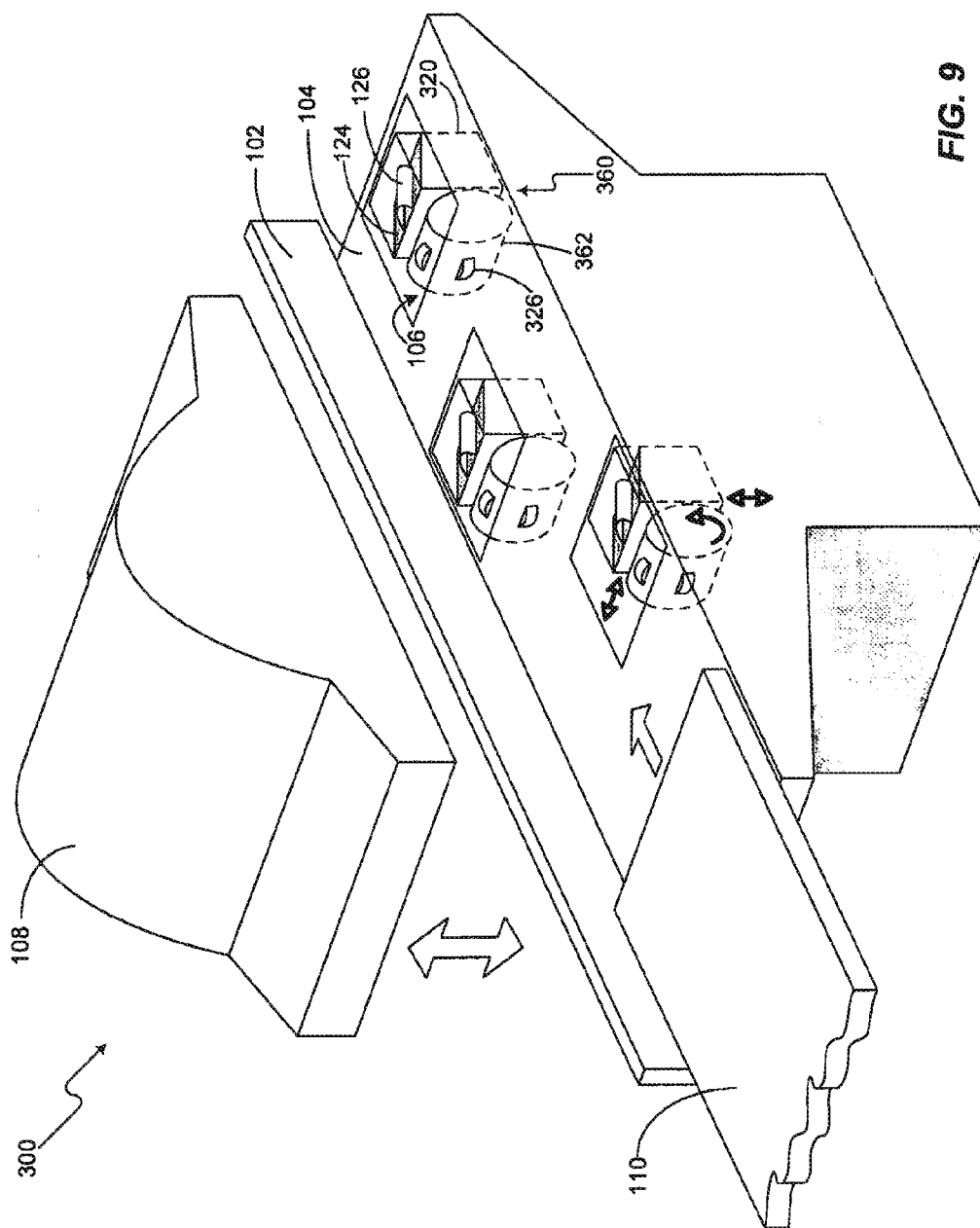
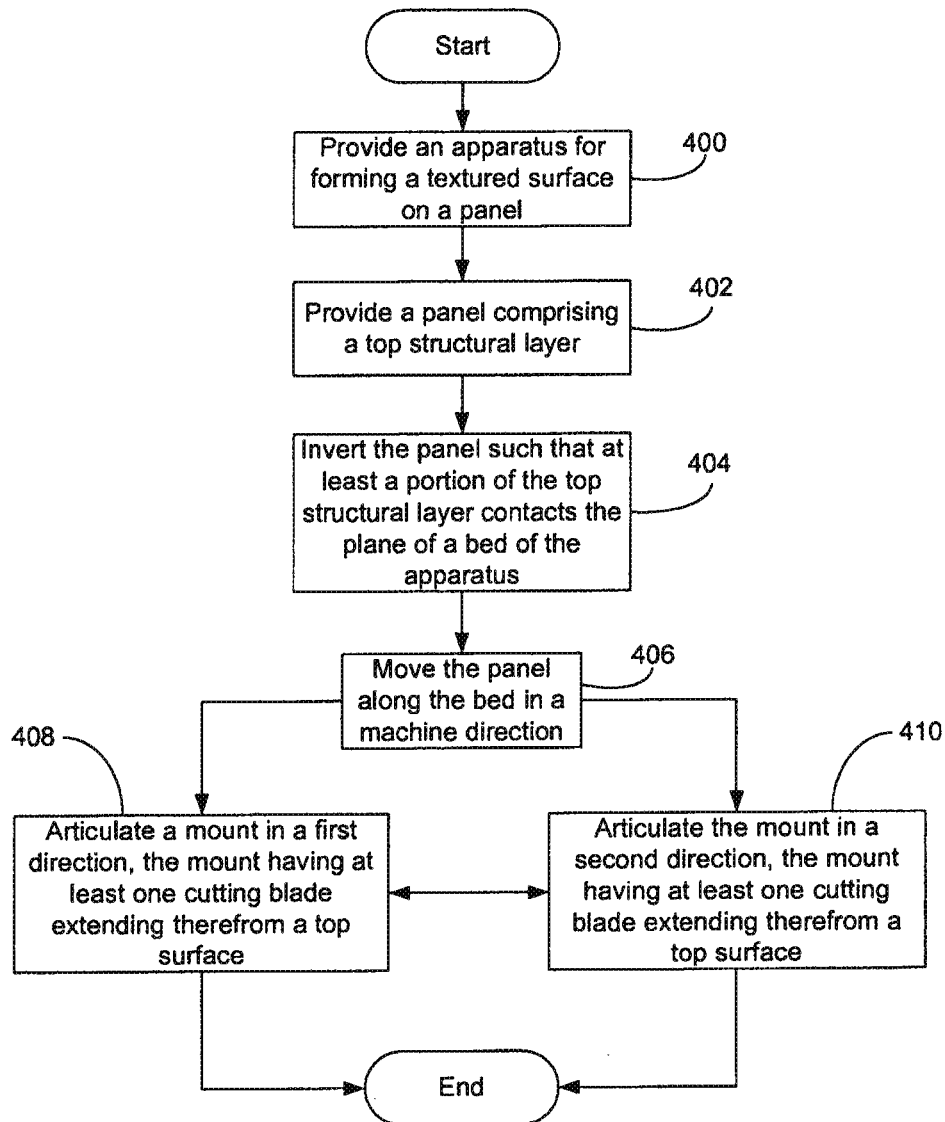


FIG. 7





**FIG. 10**

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HARDWOOD TEXTURING APPARATUS AND METHODS FOR USING SAME

This application is a divisional application of copending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/463,818, filed May 11, 2009, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/051,932, filed on May 11, 2008. Each of the
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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to apparatuses, systems and methods for forming a textured surface on a panel. More particularly, in one aspect the invention relates to apparatuses, systems and methods of using at least one cutting blade to form a textured effect, such as, for example, a hand-scraped effect, on a surface of a panel.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

For centuries, wood has been the recognized and sought after material of choice for use in flooring of homes and buildings. In centuries past, wooden planks or panels were cut and hewn by hand. However, since the early 1800s, machines have been developed for efficient cutting and planing of machined wood flooring. Unfortunately, the machined flooring lost much of their hand-hewn or individualistic appearance.

In recent decades, the types of wood flooring have expanded to include solid wood flooring, engineered flooring (which is made from several layers of wood and often designed to withstand higher levels of humidity), and laminate flooring (which typically comprises a faux wood image applied to a base of particle board). Typically, the machined or engineered flooring products are produced to have a generally smooth, machine-finished appearance.

There is a growing demand for textured panels having a surface effect that simulates the antique and aged appearance of old beams and planks that were hewn out of logs by hand with an adze or an axe. In order to reproduce the “distressed” or worn appearance of old wood floors, flooring companies have devised ways to artificially distress the planks. Generally, these distressing operations have involved the use of extensive manual labor to produce a random distressed appearance. The manual distressing process is generally accomplished using combinations of hand tools and hand techniques. Many do-it-yourself television shows provide instructions to individuals, demonstrating how to distress wood using techniques such as hitting the wood with hammers, chains, and other hard materials that create dents and cuts of different shapes and sizes. As may be appreciated, such a process can be very time and labor intensive.

Alternatively, machining has been used to attempt to produce a hand-hewn appearance. Typically however, machine distressing of the panels has generally produced a “machined” distressed appearance that has a noticeable or repeated pattern. Thus, there is a need for apparatuses, systems and methods for producing a hand-scraped or distressed appearance to surfaces of flooring panels.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the purposes of this invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, this invention, in one aspect, relates to an apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel. In one aspect, the apparatus comprises a planar

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bed configured to receive the panel and allow movement of the panel in a machine direction, the bed defining at least one opening. In a further aspect, the apparatus comprises at least one mount having a top surface and being operably positioned in the at least one opening, and at least one cutting blade fixedly mounted to the at least one mount. A distal portion of the cutting blade can extend outwardly from the top surface of the at least one mount. The apparatus, in a further aspect, comprises means for articulating the at least one mount within the at least one opening in a direction substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially transverse to the plane of the bed.

In another aspect, the invention relates to an apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel comprising a planar bed, a plurality of mounts, a plurality of cutting blades and means for moving each of the plurality of mounts. In one aspect, the planar bed is configured to receive the panel and allow movement of the panel in a machine direction and defines a plurality of openings arranged in an array. In a further aspect, the plurality of mounts each have a respective top surface and at least one of the plurality of mounts is positioned therein each of the openings. At least one of the cutting blades, in one aspect, is mounted to each of the mounts and a respective distal portion of each of the cutting blades extends outwardly from the top surface of the respective mount. In a further aspect, the means for moving each of the mounts within each of the respective openings is configured to move the mounts in a first direction substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially transverse to the plane of the bed and a second direction that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed.

In yet another aspect, a method is provided for forming a textured surface on a panel. In one aspect, the method comprises providing an apparatus comprising a planar bed defining at least one opening and configured to allow movement of the panel in a machine direction, at least one mount operably positioned therein the at least one opening, and at least one cutting blade fixedly mounted to the at least one mount. In a further aspect, a distal portion of the at least one cutting blade extends outwardly from the top surface of the at least one mount. The method, in a further aspect, comprises moving the at least one mount within the opening in a direction substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed.

Additional advantages of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The advantages of the invention will be realized and attained by means of the elements and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims. It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the invention, as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate several aspects of the invention and together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating a texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, according to one aspect.

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FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating a texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, according to another aspect.

FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram illustrating a side-view of a texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, for example as shown in FIG. 1, according to one aspect.

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram illustrating a side-view of a texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, for example as shown in FIG. 1, and further illustrating exemplary movement of mounts, according to yet another aspect.

FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram illustrating a housing and movement of a mount within the housing, according to one aspect.

FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram illustrating a side-view of a texturing apparatus for forming a textures surface on a panel, for example as shown in FIG. 1, and further illustrating exemplary movement of mounts, according to yet another aspect.

FIG. 7 is a schematic diagram illustrating a housing and movement of a mount within the housing, according to yet another aspect.

FIG. 8 is a schematic diagram illustrating a housing having fasteners for fastening the housing to a texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, according to one aspect.

FIG. 9 is a schematic diagram illustrating a texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, according to yet another aspect.

FIG. 10 is a flow-chart illustrating steps of a method for forming a textured surface on a panel, according to one aspect.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Aspects of the present invention may be understood more readily by reference to the following detailed description, examples, drawings, claims, and their previous and following description. However, before the present apparatuses, systems, and/or methods are disclosed and described, it is to be understood that this invention is not limited to the specific apparatuses, systems, and/or methods disclosed unless otherwise specified, as such can, of course, vary. It is also to be understood that the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular aspects only and is not intended to be limiting.

As used in the specification and the appended claims, the singular forms “a,” “an” and “the” include plural referents unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. Thus, for example, reference to a “cutting blade” can include two or more such cutting blades unless the context indicates otherwise.

Ranges may be expressed herein as from “about” one particular value, and/or to “about” another particular value. When such a range is expressed, another embodiment includes from the one particular value and/or to the other particular value. Similarly, when values are expressed as approximations, by use of the antecedent “about,” it will be understood that the particular value forms another embodiment. It will be further understood that the endpoints of each of the ranges are significant both in relation to the other endpoint, and independently of the other endpoint.

As used herein, the terms “optional” or “optionally” means that the subsequently described event or circumstance may or may not occur, and that the description includes instances where said event or circumstance occurs and instances where it does not.

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Reference will now be made in detail to aspects of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Wherever possible, the same reference numbers are used throughout the drawings to refer to the same or like parts.

In one aspect, a texturing apparatus is provided for forming a textured surface on a panel. With reference to FIG. 1, an exemplary texturing apparatus **100** can comprise a planar bed **104** that is configured to receive the panel **110**. In operation, the panel generally travels in a machine direction indicated by the arrow at the forward end of the panel. In various aspects, the machine direction is substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the planar bed **104**. In a further aspect, one or more guides **102** can be provided to guide the panel in the machine direction. For example, a guide can be removably mounted to the bed proximate a longitudinal edge of the bed, as illustrated in FIG. 1. As can be seen, the guide can extend vertically upward in a plane substantially transverse to the plane of the bed and parallel to the longitudinal edge of the bed. The texturing apparatus can also comprise a second guide (not shown) positioned proximate the opposing longitudinal edge of the bed. In one aspect, a guide can be movable between a first position proximate a respective longitudinal edge of the bed, and a second position spaced inwardly from the respective longitudinal edge. In this manner, the guides can be selectively spaced to guide panels having different widths.

In another aspect, the texturing apparatus **100** comprises means for moving a panel along the bed in the machine direction. For example, the texturing apparatus can comprise a power feed roller **108**. The power feed roller can be configured to be lowered to make contact with the panel **110** (indicated by the arrow in FIG. 1, for example) and to move the panel at a constant speed or at variable speeds. Optionally, the panel can be manually moved along the bed (such as by pushing the panel at a distal end along the bed), or by other means.

In various aspects, it is contemplated that the panel can comprise one or more materials. In one aspect, the panel comprises wood. In another aspect, the panel comprises a top structural layer formed of wood. In this aspect, the remainder of the panel (i.e., the portion other than the top structural layer) can be formed of wood particles, an engineered material, or other material. It is contemplated that, in one aspect, the panel can be inverted prior to moving the panel along the bed such that at least a portion of the top structural layer substantially contacts the upper surface of the bed.

The bed **104**, in one aspect, defines at least one opening **106**. As can be seen in FIGS. 1 and 2, in one aspect, an opening defined by the bed can extend substantially across the entire width of the bed (i.e., the transverse dimension of the bed). In other aspects, the opening(s) can have a width that is less than the width of the bed. In one aspect, the at least one opening comprises a plurality of openings (e.g., two or more). In this aspect, the openings can all have substantially the same dimensions, or can each have distinct dimensions (i.e., one opening can be wider or longer than another opening). Additionally, the openings **106** in one aspect can form an array. Optionally, the openings can form a random pattern. FIGS. 1 and 2 illustrate beds defining three openings; however, it will be appreciated that it is contemplated that the bed can define any number of openings.

In one aspect, one or more mounts **124** are provided that can be operably positioned in the one or more openings **106** defined by the planar bed. It is contemplated that, in one aspect, if multiple openings are defined by the bed, at least one mount can be operably positioned in each of the open-

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ings. Thus, in one aspect, one mount can be positioned in each opening. Optionally, two or more mounts can be positioned in each opening.

In one aspect, a mount **124** can be operably positioned therein an opening **106** of the planar bed **104**. For example, at least a portion of the mount can be movably mounted to a portion of an edge defined by the perimeter of the opening, to a lower surface of the bed, to an upper surface of the bed, or to another portion of the texturing apparatus. In another aspect, the edge of the opening can define a lip on which a portion of the mount can be positioned. It is contemplated that the mount can be operably positioned in the opening by various means.

Optionally, the mount **124** can be positioned within a housing **120**. The housing can then be operably positioned in a respective opening. As can be seen in FIG. 1, the housing **120**, in one aspect, can have a cross-sectional shape and size that is substantially similar to at least a portion of the shape of a respective opening. In this aspect, the housing can be attached (removably, fixedly or otherwise) directly to the bed by conventional means, such as bolting, clamping, riveting and other known means. For example, with reference to FIG. 8, one or more fastener mounts **154** can be mounted to portions of the housing with fasteners **150** passing therethrough. The fasteners can have threaded distal ends to allow them to be screwed into corresponding threaded apertures in the underside of the bed. Conventional tightening means, such as, for example and without limitation, wing nuts **152**, hex nuts, screws, and the like, can be used to assist in tightening or loosening the fasteners.

In another aspect, the shape and/or size of the housing can differ from the shape and/or size of the opening. For example, FIG. 2 illustrates a housing **220** that has a dimension transverse to the machine direction that is less than the transverse dimension of its respective opening **106**. In this aspect, the housing can be mountable beneath the surface of the bed (such as, but not limited to, as described above) or within the opening such that it can be moved beneath or within the opening in a direction substantially transverse to the machine direction (as indicated by the arrows in FIG. 2). For instance, the texturing apparatus can comprise tracks positioned beneath the surface of the bed or within the opening on which the housing can be movably mounted.

In a further aspect, at least one cutting blade is provided that is fixedly mounted to a top surface of a respective mount, such that at least a portion of the cutting blade extends outwardly from the top surface of the respective mount. For example, FIG. 3 illustrates a side view of a cutting blade **126** extending from the top surface of a respective mount **124**. It is contemplated that the cutting blades, as described in various aspects herein, can be of any shape or size. For example, in one particular aspect, a cutting blade can have a non-linear cross section. In another aspect, a cutting blade **126** can have an arcuate cross section, such as illustrated in FIG. 1. Optionally, a cutting blade can have a cross section of any other shape.

In one aspect, a cutting blade can comprise a cutting edge **127** oriented toward or facing the machine direction, as shown in FIG. 3. In this aspect, the cutting edge defines an angle relative to the plane of the bed in the machine direction. As shown in FIG. 3, in one aspect the angle α can be obtuse. In this aspect, it is contemplated that the portion of the cutting edge proximate the planar bed will contact a surface of the panel prior to the portion of the cutting edge distal to the planar bed. In other aspects, the angle can be acute, or a right angle. In various aspects, it is contemplated that the angle can vary in operation of the texturing apparatus. As shown in FIG.

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3, in one aspect the cutting edge **127**, as viewed from the side, can be substantially linear. Optionally, the cutting edge, as viewed from the side, can be non-linear (such as, but not limited to, arcuate). It is further contemplated that the cutting edge can be arcuate and concave relative to the machine direction. Optionally, the cutting edge can be arcuate and convex relative to the machine direction.

The cutting blade can have various dimensions, according to various aspects. In a particular aspect, the width of a cutting blade **126** taken at a portion proximate the top surface of the mount and perpendicular to the machine direction can range from about 1 mm to about 100 mm. Optionally, the width of the cutting blade can range from about 1 mm to about 75 mm. In another aspect, the width of the cutting blade can range from about 1 mm to about 50 mm, such as 40 mm. Likewise, the height of the cutting blade taken at the distal portion of the cutting blade (i.e., the portion of the cutting blade that first contacts the panel as it moves in the machine direction) relative to the top surface of the mount and perpendicular to the plane of the mount's top surface can range from about 0.1 mm to about 15 mm. Optionally, the height can range from about 0.1 mm to about 7.5 mm. In another aspect, the height can range from about 0.1 mm to about 3 mm, including 0.25 mm, 0.5 mm, 0.75 mm, 1 mm, 1.25 mm, 1.5 mm, 1.75 mm, 2 mm, 2.25 mm, 2.5 mm, 2.75 mm, and 3 mm.

In various aspects, one or more cutting blades **126** can be mounted to a respective mount. In a particular aspect, two or more mounts can be provided, and each mount can have a different number of cutting blades mounted thereto, such as shown in FIG. 1. In one aspect, two or more cutting blades can be mounted to a respective mount. In this aspect, the distance between the cutting blades can range from about 1 mm to about 75 mm. Optionally, the distance can range from about 1 mm to about 50 mm. In yet another aspect, the distance can range from about 25 mm to about 40 mm, including 25 mm, 30 mm, 35 mm, and 40 mm.

The texturing apparatus, according to various aspects, can comprise means for articulating a mount within an opening. As described above and as shown, for example, in FIG. 1, in one aspect, the mount **124** is operably positioned directly in the opening **106**. In this aspect, the mount can be articulated in a first direction that is substantially transverse to the plane of the bed and substantially transverse to the machine direction. Optionally, the mount can also be articulated in a second direction that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed, as illustrated by the arrows in FIG. 1. The mount can be moveable in the second direction through the entire width of the opening, or can be moveable only through a portion of the opening. In a further aspect, the mount can be pivoted around an axis that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel with the plane of the bed, such as shown in FIG. 6.

For clarity and conciseness, as used herein, articulation in a first direction can mean articulation in a direction that is substantially transverse to the plane of the bed and substantially transverse to the machine direction. However, it can also mean articulation relative to a first axis substantially transverse to the plane of the bed and substantially transverse to the machine direction. Similarly, as used herein, articulation in a second direction can mean articulation in a direction that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed. However, articulation in a second direction can also mean articulation relative to a second axis substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed.

In various aspects, the mount **124** can be simultaneously articulated or moved in more than one direction. For instance, the mount can be articulated in the first direction while substantially simultaneously being articulated in the second direction. In one exemplary aspect, the mount can be move-
able in any or all of these directions by means of a drive cam that is operably coupled to the mount. In other aspects, one or more pneumatic and/or hydraulic cylinders can be operably coupled to the mount and configured to articulate the mount in one or more of these selected exemplified directions. Option-
ally, one or more motors can be operatively connected to the mount and configured to move the mount in the first and/or second directions and/or to pivot the mount about an axis, as described above.

As described above, in another aspect, the mount can be operably positioned within a respective housing. In one aspect, a housing **220** is provided that has a transverse dimension relative to the machine direction that is less than the transverse width of the corresponding opening, such as shown in FIG. **2**. In this aspect, the housing can be articulated in a second direction that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed. In another aspect, a housing **120** is provided that has a transverse dimension relative to the machine direction that is substantially the same as the transverse width of the corresponding opening. In this particular aspect, the mount **124** can be articulated within the housing in a second direction that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed. In either aspect, the mount can be articulated within the housing in a first
direction that is substantially perpendicular to the plane of the bed.

As can be appreciated, the distance through which the mount and/or housing are articulated in the second direction can vary. In one aspect, the mount can be articulated through a distance of about 0.1 mm to about 50 mm. Optionally, the distance can range from about 0.1 mm to about 25 mm. In another aspect, the distance can range from about 0.1 mm to about 20 mm, including, without limitation, 1 mm, 2.5 mm, 5 mm, 7.5 mm, 10 mm, 12.5 mm, 15 mm, 17.5 mm, and 20 mm.

For example, FIG. **3** illustrates a side view of a texturing apparatus, in which each mount **124** is positioned such that a distal portion of the cutting blade extends upwardly beyond the plane of the bed, such as at a maximum height. It is contemplated that, in one aspect, the maximum height is reached when at least a portion of the top surface of the mount (such as, but not limited to, an edge facing the machine direction) is substantially in the same plane as the plane of the top surface of the bed. The mount can then be articulated in a substantially vertical direction to a position at which the height of the distal portion of the cutting blade relative to the plane of the bed is less than the maximum height. As one skilled in the art will appreciate, in one aspect, by articulating the mount in a substantially vertical direction, the depth of a cut made to a panel by the cutting blade can be varied.

In a particular aspect, the mount can be positioned such that the plane defined by the top surface of the mount is substantially parallel to the plane of the bed. Optionally, the mount can be positioned such that a plane defined by the top surface of the mount defines an angle other than 0° relative to the plane of the bed, such as shown in FIG. **3**. Further, the cutting blade can be shaped such that an opening or passage is defined therebetween the surface of the cutting blade and the top surface of the mount. As can be appreciated, as the panel is moved in the machine direction along the bed, the mount and the cutting blade can be selectively moved to contact the panel and make a cut therein a top structural layer of the panel to cut

through a portion of a thickness of the panel, resulting in particles or shavings of the panel material being sheared off of the panel. In this particular aspect, as the cutting blade cuts a portion of the panel, any particles or shavings can fall through the opening between the cutting blade and mount. The particles can fall into a waste receptacle or other receptacle for later removal. In other aspects, other means can be provided for removing particles from the texturing apparatus as a panel is cut. For example, an aperture can be defined therethrough a mount, such as below a portion of the cutting blade, such that the particles or shavings can fall through the aperture as the panel is cut.

FIG. **4** illustrates several possible positions to which a mount can be articulated in a substantially vertical direction, according to various aspects. For example, the mount can be articulated to a first position at which the cutting blade extends beyond the plane of the bed at a maximum height, as represented by mount **124a**. Optionally, the mount can also be articulated to a second position at which a distal portion of the cutting blade is less than the maximum height, as represented by mount **124c**. In one aspect, the second position can be a position at which a distal portion of the cutting blade is flush with or below the plane of the bed, as represented by mount **124b**. As can be appreciated, the mount can be articulated about and between the first position and the second positions. FIG. **5** further illustrates the exemplary substantially vertical movement of a mount **124** within a respective housing **120**. As can be appreciated, in other aspects, the housing itself can be articulated in a substantially vertical direction that is substantially perpendicular to the plane of the bed. As discussed above, by articulating the mount, the depth of a cut made to the panel by the cutting blade can be varied. In one aspect in which the cross-section of the cutting blade is substantially arcuate, by articulating the mount in a substantially vertical direction, the width of the cut can also be varied.

In one aspect, the vertical distance through which the mount can be articulated can vary, and can also depend on the height of the respective cutting blade. In one aspect, the mount can be articulated through a distance of about 0.1 mm to about 15 mm. Optionally, the distance can range from about 0.1 mm to about 7.5 mm. In another aspect, the distance can range from about 0.1 mm to about 3 mm, including 0.25 mm, 0.5 mm, 0.75 mm, 1 mm, 1.25 mm, 1.5 mm, 1.75 mm, 2 mm, 2.25 mm, 2.5 mm, 2.75 mm, and 3 mm.

It is contemplated that, in one aspect, the mounts (and/or housings) can be articulated by one or more drive cams **140** operably coupled to the mounts and driven by one or more drive shafts **142**, as shown in FIG. **4**. In another aspect, a mount can be articulated by at least one hydraulic cylinder or pneumatic cylinder operably coupled to the mount. Optionally, a mount can be articulated by at least one motor operably coupled to the mount. As can be appreciated, in various aspects, the mounts (and/or housings) can be articulated individually. For example, in one aspect, a bed can define two or more openings, each having at least one mount operably positioned therein. In this aspect, each mount can be operably coupled to a respective articulating means (e.g., mechanical means, hydraulic means, pneumatic means, electro-mechanical means, etc.) such that each mount can be articulated independently of the other mounts. In another aspect, a processor can be used to control the articulating means, and thus to control the movement of the at least one mount and/or housing. In this aspect, the processor can be configured to generate a random movement pattern of the at least one cutting blade to create a series of randomly positioned cuts in a panel. In a further aspect, as described above, each mount can be articulated simultaneously in more than one direction.

In one aspect, the texturing apparatus comprises means for pivoting a mount about an axis transverse to the machine direction and parallel to the plane of the bed. For example, FIG. 6 illustrates several possible positions to which a mount can be pivoted about a pivot **128**. For example, the mount can be pivoted to a first position at which the cutting edge **127** of a cutting blade extends beyond the plane of the bed at a maximum height, as represented by mount **124d**. The mount can also be articulated to a second position at which the cutting edge of the cutting blade is less than the maximum height, as represented by mount **124f**. In one aspect, the second position can be a position at which the cutting edge of the cutting blade is flush with or below the plane of the bed (i.e., the cutting edge does not extend beyond the plane of the bed), as represented by mount **124e**. As can be appreciated, the mount can be pivoted about and between the first position and the second position. FIG. 7 illustrates an exemplary pivoting movement of a mount **124** within a respective housing **120**. As can be appreciated, the pivot can be mounted proximate a side of the housing, such as shown in FIG. 7, or can be positioned substantially toward the center of the housing. In one aspect, the mount is pivotable through an acute angle relative to the plane of the bed, as represented by the arrow of FIG. 7. As discussed above with regard to articulating the mount in a substantially vertical direction, by pivoting the mount, the depth of the cut can be varied.

According to yet another aspect of the present invention, a texturing apparatus **300** is provided that comprises at least one cutting assembly **360**, as illustrated in FIG. 9. In one aspect, the at least one cutting assembly **360** comprises a roller cutter **362** having at least one respective cutting blade **326**, and a mount **124** having at least one respective cutting blade **126**. In one aspect, the mount can be mounted and articulated such as described above. In another aspect, the mount can be mounted within a respective housing **320**, also such as described above. The roller cutter **362** can have one or more cutting blades **326** positioned around a circumferential surface of the roller cutter, such as shown in FIG. 9. In one aspect, the roller cutter has between two and five cutting blades positioned around its circumference. According to a particular aspect, three cutting blades are provided around the circumference of the roller cutter, and substantially equally spaced from each other along the circumference. In another aspect, the roller cutter can rotate about an axis substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed. In still another aspect, the roller cutter can be operably coupled to the mount, and thus, can move in coordination with the articulation of the respective mount.

At least one opening **106** can be defined within the planar bed **104**, and at least one cutting assembly **360** can be positioned therein each opening. A cutting assembly can be placed therein an opening such that the roller cutter **362** faces the machine direction, with the housing **320** positioned behind the roller cutter in the machine direction (i.e., the plurality of roller cutting blade are positioned upstream of the at least one cutting blade **126** of the respective mount). In one aspect, the roller cutter is positioned longitudinally in front of the housing such that the roller cutter cutting blade(s) **326** are longitudinally aligned with the cutting blade **126** of the mount. According to a further aspect, the height of the roller cutter cutting blades relative to the plane of the bed is less than the respective height of the mount cutting blade **126** with respect to the plane of the bed.

As the panel travels in the machine direction, at least one of the roller cutter cutting blade(s) **326** can contact the panel **110** to create an initial cut, such as in the top structural layer of the panel. As may be appreciated, the roller cutter can be config-

ured to rotate toward the machine direction, as indicated by the curved arrow in FIG. 9. The mount cutting blade **126** can then contact the panel and create a second cut, substantially along the same path as the initial cut. As may be appreciated, if the height of the mount cutting blade is greater than the height of the roller cutter cutting blade, the second cut made by the mount cutting blade will deepen the initial cut. Thus, it is contemplated that the roller cutter cutting blade **326** and the mount cutting blade can be positioned substantially in a common plane substantially parallel to the machine direction and can cooperate to create a single cut in the panel.

As shown in FIG. 9, according to various aspects, a plurality of openings **106** can be defined therein the planar bed in an offset or staggered manner. The openings can have a transverse dimension that is substantially equal to the width of the bed, or can have a transverse dimension that is less than the width of the bed, as shown in FIG. 9. At least one cutting assembly **360** can be positioned therein each opening. The cutting assembly can be moved within each opening in a second direction that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed, such as indicated by the transverse arrow of FIG. 9. The cutting assembly can also be moved within each opening in a first direction that is substantially vertical and substantially perpendicular to the plane of the bed. Thus, as described above, the cutting assembly can be moved downward in the first direction such that the roller cutter cutting blade(s) **326** and mount cutting blade **126** lie below the plane of the planar bed. As the panel passes over the opening in which such a cutting assembly is positioned, it is contemplated that the panel will pass over the opening without being cut by the respective cutting blades. It is further contemplated that, by adjusting the position of the cutting assembly in the first direction, the depth of the cut in the panel formed by the respective cutting assembly can be selected or controlled.

In one aspect, the roller cutter **362** and housing **320** can be mechanically or electro-mechanically coupled to each other such that the entire cutting assembly **360** moves in the first and/or second directions as desired. In a further aspect, each cutting assembly can be moved independently from one another in the first and/or second directions. Optionally, the roller cutter and housing **320** of each cutting assembly can be configured to move in the first and/or second directions independently. For example, the roller cutter **362** and mount **124** can each be operatively coupled to respective articulating means, such as hydraulic or pneumatic cylinders, motors, etc. As may be appreciated, a processor can be used to control the articulating means, and thus to control the movement of the at least one cutting assembly or the individual roller cutter(s) and housing(s). The processor can be configured to generate a random movement pattern of the cutting assemblies to create a series of randomly positioned cuts in a panel.

In use, the texturing apparatus according to various aspects (such as, but not limited to, the exemplary aspects of the texturing apparatuses as described above), can be used to form a textured surface on a panel. With reference to FIG. 10, at step **400**, a texturing apparatus can be provided comprising a bed that defines three openings, such as shown in FIG. 1. Each of three mounts **124** can be operably positioned therein a respective opening **106**. The mounts can comprise at least one cutting blade **126** fixedly mounted thereon a top surface of the mount and extending outwardly from the top surface. It is contemplated that the texturing apparatus comprises a bed that defines any number of openings, mounts, and cutting blades that can be used to form a textured surface on a panel,

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and aspects of the present invention are not intended to be limited to the particular texturing apparatus described in the following description.

At step 402, a panel 110 can be provided. The panel can comprise a top structural layer. The panel can also comprise wood or other material. At step 404, the panel is inverted such that at least a portion of the top structural layer contacts the plane of the bed 104. The panel can be moved along the bed in a machine direction at step 406. As described above, the panel can be moved automatically, manually, or a combination thereof. As the panel moves along the bed in the machine direction, it is contemplated that at least a portion of the panel will be moved across at least a portion of one or more openings. The mounts can be articulated in one or more directions as the panel is moved along the machine direction.

For example, at step 408, one or more mounts can be articulated in a second direction that is substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially parallel to the plane of the bed. Similarly, at step 410, the one or more mounts can be articulated in a first direction that is substantially vertical and substantially perpendicular to the plane of the bed. The mounts can be articulated in either or both of the first and second directions simultaneously with the movement of the panel along the bed. As can be appreciated, the articulation of one or more mounts simultaneously with the movement of the panel along the bed can be used to cut through a thickness of the panel, forming various cuts in the panel. For example, articulation of a mount in the second direction while a panel is moving in the machine direction along the bed can create a diagonal cut in the panel. Optionally, the articulation of the mounts can be started and stopped as the panel is moved along the bed. The articulation can be controlled manually, automatically, or by a combination thereof. As discussed above, in one aspect, each mount can be controlled by independent articulating means. For example, one mount can be articulated in the second direction as the panel moves along the bed, while another mount can be held in a fixed position.

As can be appreciated, as the panel moves along the bed in the machine direction, at least a portion of the top structural layer can be contacted by one or more cutting blades mounted on one or more mounts. In one aspect, the cutting blades are configured to form a cut in at least a portion of the top structural layer. By articulating the mounts in various directions, the depth, shape and/or position of the cuts can be manipulated. For example, to impart a deeper cut, a mount can be articulated upwardly in the first direction. To make a shallower cut, the mount can be articulated downwardly in the first direction. Similarly, the position of the cuts on the top structural layer of the panel can be manipulated by articulating the mounts in the second direction. As described above, the articulation of the mounts can be controlled automatically, manually, or both. Thus, the cuts formed in the panel can be formed in a predetermined pattern, in a random pattern, etc. For instance, if the texturing apparatus is automatically controlled by a computing device, such as, for example, a processor, software can be provided for randomizing the articulation of the mounts such that each panel that is textured by the texturing apparatus will have a substantially unique appearance.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the present invention without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention. Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. It is intended that the specification and examples be considered as

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exemplary only, with a true scope and spirit of the invention being indicated by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, comprising:

a planar bed having a length and a width, wherein a machine direction of the texturing apparatus extends along the length of the planar bed from a first end of the planar bed to a second end of the planar bed, wherein the planar bed defines at least one opening, and wherein the planar bed receives the panel as the panel moves in the machine direction;

at least one mount, each mount being positioned in an opening of the at least one opening of the planar bed, each mount having a top surface;

at least one mount cutting blade attached to the top surface of each of the at least one mount;

at least one roller cutter, each of the at least one roller cutter positioned in an opening of the at least one opening of the planar bed, each roller having a circumferential surface, and being rotatable about an axis substantially transverse to the machine direction;

a plurality of roller cutting blades attached to the circumferential surface of each of the at least one roller cutter, wherein each of the at least one roller cutter is operably coupled to a mount of the at least one mount; and

an articulation assembly operably coupled to the at least one mount, wherein the articulation assembly articulates each of the at least one mount within an opening of the at least one opening to selectively bring at least one of the at least one mount cutting blade and the at least one roller cutter into contact with the panel to cut through a portion of a thickness of the panel.

2. The texturing apparatus of claim 1, wherein the each of at least one roller cutter is positioned upstream of each of the at least one mount in each of the at least one opening of the at least one opening relative to the machine direction.

3. The texturing apparatus of claim 2, wherein each of the plurality of roller cutting blades and each of the at least one mount cutting blade of each of the at least one mount are positioned substantially in a common plane that is parallel to the machine direction and transverse to the planar bed.

4. The texturing apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a processor in communication with the articulation assembly, wherein the processor controls the articulation of the articulation assembly, wherein the processor controls the articulation of the articulation assembly.

5. The texturing apparatus of claim 4, wherein the processor generates a random articulation pattern.

6. A texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, comprising:

a planar bed having a length and a width, wherein a machine direction of the texturing apparatus extends along the length of the planar bed from a first end of the planar bed to a second end of the planar bed, wherein the planar bed defines at least one opening, and wherein the planar bed receives the panel as the panel moves in the machine direction;

at least one cutting assembly, each cutting assembly operably positioned in an opening of the at least one opening, each of the at least one cutting assembly comprising:

a mount having a top surface; and

a roller cutter having a circumferential surface, and being rotatable about an axis substantially transverse to the machine direction; and

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a plurality of cutting blades, wherein at least a first cutting blade of the plurality of cutting blades is attached to the circumferential surface of the roller cutter of each cutting assembly, and at least a second cutting blade of the plurality of cutting blades is attached to the top surface of the mount of each cutting assembly; and

an articulation assembly operably coupled to the at least one cutting assembly, wherein the articulation assembly articulates each of the at least one cutting assembly within an opening of the at least one opening to selectively bring at least one cutting blade of the plurality of cutting blades into contact with the panel to cut through a portion of a thickness of the panel.

7. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein a height of the first cutting blade of a first cutting assembly is less than a height of the second cutting blade of the first cutting assembly relative to the planar bed.

8. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the first cutting blade and the second cutting blade of a first cutting assembly cooperate to create a single cut in the panel.

9. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the articulation assembly articulates each of the at least one cutting assembly within an opening of the at least one opening relative to a first axis substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially transverse to the planar bed.

10. The texturing apparatus of claim 9, wherein the articulation assembly articulates each of the at least one cutting assembly within an opening of the at least one opening relative to a second axis substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially transverse to the first axis.

11. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, further comprising a processor in communication with the articulation assembly, wherein the processor controls the articulation of the articulation assembly.

12. The texturing apparatus of claim 11, wherein the processor generates a random articulation pattern.

13. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the articulation assembly comprises a drive cam operably coupled to the at least one cutting assembly.

14. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the articulation assembly comprises at least one pneumatic cylinder operably coupled to the at least one cutting assembly.

15. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the articulation assembly comprises at least one hydraulic cylinder operably coupled to the at least one cutting assembly.

16. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the articulation assembly comprises at least one motor operably coupled to the at least one cutting assembly.

17. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the plurality of cutting blades further comprises at least third and fourth cutting blades attached to the circumferential surface of the roller cutter of each cutting assembly.

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18. The texturing apparatus of claim 17, wherein the first, third and fourth cutting blades are substantially equally spaced from each other along the circumferential surface of the roller cutter of each cutting assembly.

19. The texturing apparatus of claim 6, wherein the at least one opening comprises a plurality of openings, wherein the at least one cutting assembly comprises a corresponding plurality of cutting assemblies, and wherein the articulation assembly individually articulates each of the plurality of cutting assemblies within each of the plurality of openings relative to the other cutting assemblies of the plurality of cutting assemblies.

20. A texturing apparatus for forming a textured surface on a panel, comprising:

a planar bed having a length and a width, wherein a machine direction of the texturing apparatus extends along the length of the planar bed from a first end of the planar bed to a second end of the planar bed, wherein the planar bed defines a plurality of openings arranged in an array, and wherein the planar bed receives the panel as the panel moves in the machine direction;

a plurality of cutting assemblies, each cutting assembly operably positioned in a respective one of the plurality of openings, each of the plurality of cutting assemblies comprising:

a mount having a top surface, wherein the mount further comprises at least one mount cutting blade attached to the top surface thereof; and

a roller cutter having a circumferential surface and being rotatable about an axis substantially transverse to the machine direction, wherein the roller cutter further comprises at least one roller cutting blade attached to the circumferential surface thereof; and

a means for individually moving each of the plurality of cutting assemblies within a respective opening of the planar bed relative to the other cutting assemblies of the plurality of cutting assemblies.

21. The texturing apparatus of claim 20, wherein the means for individually moving each of the plurality of cutting assemblies axially moves each cutting assembly within a respective opening relative to a first axis substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially transverse to the planar bed.

22. The texturing apparatus of claim 21, wherein the means for individually moving each of the plurality of cutting assemblies axially moves each cutting assembly within a respective opening relative to a second axis substantially transverse to the machine direction and substantially transverse to the first axis.

23. The texturing apparatus of claim 22, wherein each cutting assembly is selectively, individually movable relative to the respective first and second axis substantially simultaneously.

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